

# Strategy Research Project

## Developing Strategic Leader Competencies in Today's Junior Officer Corps

by

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United States Army War College  
Class of 2013

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## **Abstract**

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## **Developing Strategic Leader Competencies in Today's Junior Officer Corps**

Soldiers fight when they have to, but solve the problem whenever they can.

—General Stanley McChrystal<sup>1</sup>

In January 2009, 1st Battalion, 32nd Infantry Regiment – Task Force (TF) Chosin -- accepted authority for Kunar Province, Afghanistan. This volatile and complex province located in the northeastern portion of Afghanistan straddles the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and had proven problematic for coalition forces during the previous eight years of combat operations. In the four years preceding the deployment of Task Force Chosin, 84 American Soldiers lost their lives, and another 472 were wounded during the conduct of operations.<sup>2</sup>

Junior officers in the Task Force were well-trained and tactically sound. They were assertive, decisive, disciplined and willing to engage with and destroy the enemy. During close combat with the enemy, their ability to conduct fire and maneuver, and integrate fire support, reflected the battalion's emphasis on building "combat capable" leaders. From a tactical standpoint, they were well prepared to confront the enemy; however, the unit's mission was much broader and more complex than solely defeating the enemy.

TF Chosin's mission was to defeat Anti-Afghan Forces in order to establish security and strengthen the legitimacy and sovereignty of provincial and district governments through education, partnership, and mentoring. Defeat of the enemy -- clearly the tactical task -- enabled the execution of equally important non-lethal tasks-- and junior leaders bore the responsibility for leading their units in the execution of these non-lethal tasks. In accordance with operational lines of effort identified by the

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), these tasks included protecting the people, developing Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), improving Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) governing capacity, and supporting legitimate economic growth.

Based on the unit's operational construct, platoons were tasked with conducting wide area security operations within assigned districts and assisting government officials in the development and implementation of government processes. Platoon leaders assisted local tribal leaders and government officials in leading development councils. They also influenced District Governors to become responsible stewards of government resources, and modeled how to solicit input and feedback in transparent and open forums. Junior officers helped government leaders prioritize development needs, conduct economic assessments with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and nominate projects to improve the economy, reduce unemployment, and improve quality of life. They engaged the population – formally and informally – and conferred with tribal leaders on issues important to their villages. They developed programs of instruction to train and mentor Afghan National Army and Police forces. The execution of these non-combat related tasks and requirements demonstrates that while tactical competency is required for survival, and the establishment of security conditions necessary for governance and economic development, in a counterinsurgency-based mission focused on the population, tactical competency and operations targeting the enemy will not independently ensure mission success.

As the Commander of TF Chosin, I quickly realized that successful mission accomplishment hinged on the development of interpersonal competencies that had not

been addressed in pre-deployment leader development programs. Battalion and brigade pre-deployment training and leader development programs failed to recognize that junior officers without a wide range of interpersonal competencies jeopardized successful mission accomplishment just as much as those officers who were tactically incompetent. Not only did many junior officers lack the interpersonal competencies necessary for success, the decentralized nature of operations provided few opportunities to supervise and assist in the execution of their duties. These leaders, for the most part, operated within my intent and with a significant degree of autonomy.

The cumulative effect of these dynamics highlights the Army's need to integrate a different set of skills and competencies into leader development programs to prepare junior officers for the complex nature of the current and emerging operating environment. This is a strategic choice for the Army, as the current generation of junior officers will become the Army's next generation of officers who operate and lead at the strategic level. Developing junior officers with the competencies required to operate in complex and ambiguous environments postures them well for transition into the strategic realm, while simultaneously preparing them to lead with distinction in the types of environments and circumstances that characterize the current and future global security environment.

This research effort provides recommendations for senior Army leaders with respect to developing interpersonal competencies and other skills in junior officers that enable them to operate effectively in the current and future global security environment. The research effort begins with an analysis and assessment of the future operating environments, transitions to an evaluation of the types of skills and competencies

required in junior leaders, examines the Army Leader Development model and its relationship to junior officer development, and concludes with recommendations.

### The Future Operating Environment

The Army Capstone Concept describes the future operating environment as one characterized by uncertainty, complexity, rapid change, and persistent conflict.<sup>3</sup> Enemies and adversaries will be well-armed, well-equipped, and ideologically motivated.<sup>4</sup> Conflict itself, episodic to this point in history, will be much more persistent and involve a wider array of both state and non-state actors.<sup>5</sup> The Army, downsizing following the conclusion of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and facing budget cuts resulting from the Budget Control Act of 2011, will have fewer resources at its disposal. These federal budget reductions will reduce Army end strength over the next five years from 570,000 to 490,000, resulting in the loss of combat-proven Soldiers whose expertise and experience will be difficult to replace.

In a monograph that examined lessons learned from the last decade of war and their associated impact on the new strategic environment, David Tressler argues that U.S. military transformation requires adaptation to the types of operations prevalent in the current and emerging global security environment, and the shift of greater responsibility down to tactical units on the ground. The complex and ambiguous future environment will place greater demands on junior officers, and they will be expected to remain ready to respond to worldwide challenges across the full spectrum of conflict, and conduct operations as part of a joint and multinational force.<sup>6</sup> These challenges occur not only during the conduct of combat operations, but are equally present in other military operations such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as evidenced

during the Army's efforts in response to the devastating earthquake in Haiti in January 2010.

Operations in Haiti required significant coordination at all levels (tactical through strategic) with Haitian authorities, integration with the Department of State, interface with countless non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and daily interaction with the Haitian populace.<sup>7</sup> Successful execution of these operations relied heavily on junior leaders capable of engaging with and influencing populations. The operation in Haiti precisely reflects the sentiments conveyed by Army Chief of Staff, General Raymond Odierno during his recent speech at the Center for Strategic Leadership and International Studies. During this speech he stated, "Above all else, what distinguishes the Army from the other services is that the Army's strength is operating amongst populations."<sup>8</sup>

The description of the future operating environment and the complex nature of military operations highlights the changing nature of warfare and the need to depart from conventional approaches to preparing for war, and serves notice to the irrelevance of Cold War leader development models that principally guided Professional Military Education (PME) programs for over 50 years. In a world in which the United States is the lone global military superpower, conventional approaches to war -- heavily reliant on centralized command and control, unilateral operations, and the use of force against opposing uniformed military forces will no longer be the norm.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, the future operating environment necessitates the synchronization of direct and indirect approaches, the empowerment of lower echelons, and the implementation of mission command that enables decentralized operations.<sup>10</sup>

In an era of global fiscal constraint, multinational operations will become more prevalent, and the nation will increasingly rely on current and emerging partner nations to achieve common national level strategic objectives and outcomes. Given this fact, junior officers will increasingly face the challenges of integrating and synchronizing tactical level operations with joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) partners. Therefore, junior officers require a different set of skills and competencies to meet and overcome these challenges.

### Required Skills and Competencies

Senior leaders understand the need to develop a broader set of skills and competencies in junior Army officers. While they have stopped short of clearly defining strategic outcomes, they have addressed qualitative requirements. In a growing number of Army strategic documents – to include the Army Campaign Plan, The Army Posture Statement, and Army Strategy – the use of terms such as “multi-skilled” and “adaptive” are increasing in frequency, and Army leaders are reinforcing this narrative in formal statements.<sup>11</sup> For example, General George Casey, while serving as the Army Chief of Staff, addressed the need for a broader range of competencies beyond those narrowly defined by combat operations, by stating, “The Army needs to develop officers who once confronted with unfamiliar situations possess the competencies to figure things out.”<sup>12</sup> The current generation of junior leaders have expressed similar sentiments. In an Army leader development panel study conducted in 2002, junior officers indicated that the officer education system did not provide them the skills for success in full spectrum operations.<sup>13</sup>

Leader development programs at the unit level, underscored by effective PME programs in the institutional domain, are the ideal mechanism for addressing this issue.

High quality leader development programs are not only instrumental in the education of junior officers, but they increase interaction between a commander and subordinates, provide commanders with forums to share their intent and experience, and assist commanders in assessing the performance of subordinates. Coincidentally, in the same 2002 panel study, junior officers also noted that they were not receiving adequate leader development experiences, and there was diminishing direct contact between seniors and subordinates.<sup>14</sup>

The Army War College bears responsibility for developing strategic leaders. The Army defines the strategic leader by the position held, the number of people influenced, and the time horizon over which the leader's decisions will have an impact. In preparing senior officers for the demands of strategic level operations, the college provides students instruction designed to develop the skills and competencies required to operate effectively at the strategic level. However, this education occurs late in an officer's career. Many of the skills and competencies taught at the college are also relevant for junior officers and should be integrated into leader development programs earlier in the career progression of officers. A comprehensive look at defined strategic leader competencies, cross-referenced against demands of the future operating environment, aids in identifying those competencies necessary for development in junior officers.

The Army War College's Strategic Leader Primer groups strategic leadership competencies into three categories -- conceptual, technical, and interpersonal.<sup>15</sup> It is important to highlight and clarify the definition of a competency. A competency is categorically different from a trait because competencies can be developed. While

character traits may contribute significantly to the development of certain competencies, they are genetic and cannot be developed. Therefore, once needed competencies are identified, senior leaders can design training strategies to build these competencies within junior officers.

Conceptual competencies include thinking skills necessary to understand and operate in complex and ambiguous operating environments. At the most basic level, conceptual competencies are those skills that assist in identifying links between apparently unrelated events, applying critical thinking skills to reach potential solutions, and understanding the second and third order effects of those decisions.<sup>16</sup> Conceptual competencies are defined as frame of reference development, problem management, and envisioning the future.

Technical competencies include knowledge of the external political, economic, and cultural systems that affect an organization.<sup>17</sup> In the strategic environment, technical competencies include an understanding of organizational systems and culture, an appreciation of functional relationships external to an organization, and knowledge of the broader political and social systems in which the organization must operate. Technical competencies generally differ significantly across the direct, organizational, and strategic levels of leadership, and as a result, require a continuous process of learning and education.

Conceptual and technical competencies are important; however, for junior leaders, interpersonal competencies are most important within the context of this research effort. Interpersonal competencies are vital with respect to human interaction because human interaction -- with local populations, multinational partners, interagency



civilians, and members internal to Army organizations -- will dominate the future operating environment. These competencies allow junior leaders to build consensus internally and externally, build and maintain effective relationships and teams, and integrate multiple perspectives to understand and define complex problems and operating environments. Unlike technical competencies, interpersonal competencies broadly transcend all levels of leadership. In short, interpersonal competencies enable junior leaders to better interact with and relate to people internal and external to the organization, and from varying backgrounds. Interpersonal competencies should, therefore, serve as the starting point for leader professional development. As a result, investment in PME and unit level training programs designed to develop interpersonal competencies in junior leaders pays immediate and lasting dividends. Developing these skills not only contributes to success at the tactical level, but also establishes a solid foundation for success at the strategic level.

Ultimately, successful strategic leaders possess a blend of interpersonal, conceptual, and technical strategic competencies. However, the Army is fundamentally about people. FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*, defines Army leaders as anyone who by virtue of role or responsibility inspires and influences people to accomplish organization goals. Army leaders motivate people both inside and outside the chain of command to pursue actions, focus thinking, and shape decisions for the greater good of the organization.<sup>18</sup> By applying lessons learned from Iraq and Afghanistan, and forecasts about the future operating environment, it is possible to identify specific interpersonal competencies that deserve greater focus and attention. These skills include the *ability to communicate, to build consensus, to negotiate, and to conduct key leader*

*engagements*. Introducing the development of interpersonal skills in PME and leader development programs should not send mixed signals; rather, it serves to assist leaders in recognizing the broader array of skills necessary in the future operating environment.

Effective communication is the most fundamental of these interpersonal skills. Whether communicating directly or indirectly, verbally or in writing, with or without an interpreter, through social media, or giving a media interview, the ability to concisely and accurately deliver a message is an essential skill for junior officers. Effective communication requires clarity of thought, direction, and process.<sup>19</sup> While most human interaction at the direct and organizational levels occurs through face to face communication, the future operating environment will place greater emphasis on written communication. During the conduct of decentralized operations, subordinates dislocated from their higher headquarters shape a greater understanding of the environment. The ability to provide effective and concise written summaries is important. While technical means of providing information to senior commanders are greater than ever before, they cannot replace personal assessments from junior officers who understand situations with great clarity based on their consistent interaction with the local populace, interface with local government leaders, and partnership with host nation forces.

Oral communication will have greater importance in the future operating environment as well. Junior officers will be required to communicate with diverse and multi-cultural audiences. They will increasingly interface with foreign government officials, the local populace, and with multinational and host nation military partners. This will require them to deliver messages across cultures, and understand different

value and belief systems in those cultures, thereby requiring them to communicate through interpreters.

The presence of media in the current and future operating environment presents another challenge for junior officers, and further emphasizes the importance of oral communications skills. During the invasion of Grenada in 1983, there was no media in country.<sup>20</sup> During Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm in 1991, media presence in the operating environment was relatively small, and was largely limited to interaction with senior leaders at the operational and strategic level. Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have witnessed an explosion in media, with the presence of hundreds of media outlets, from both international and national news agencies, many embedded for extended periods in tactical level formations.<sup>21</sup> As such, media engagements now occur at much lower levels of the chain of command, and the messages junior officers convey to these audiences can have strategic impacts.

Building consensus is also an essential skill for junior officers as the number of organizations, individuals, and multinational partners external to an organization expands. In the current operating environment, junior officers partner with local government officials, host nation forces, interagency civilians, non-governmental organizations, and a plethora of contractors. Effective interaction and integration with these actors requires unity of effort that is principally obtained through consensus. Consensus building is a process based on effective reasoning, logic, and negotiation, and is often achieved over a longer time horizon.<sup>22</sup> Consensus does not necessarily mean unanimous agreement, but often reflects compromise on the part of all parties involved. Most importantly, consensus encourages collaboration and is enabled through

transparent processes that involve all stakeholders and consider multiple points of view. This requires the establishment of open forums that encourage and embrace input and inclusively allow all stakeholders to understand with clarity the important issues at stake.<sup>23</sup> This is far different than giving orders or directives. Achieving consensus requires leaders to employ effective reasoning, to be clear in their communication, enable transparent processes, and become astute in facilitating collaborative decision making.<sup>24</sup> At times, building consensus must also occur at the tactical level with former adversaries. This will require junior leaders to become more aware of personal, institutional, and national biases and to view complex problems through the lens of these types of stakeholder that are too often portrayed as shallow minded individuals driven by ideology, hatred and other impulses perceived as primitive.

The third interpersonal skill requiring development in junior officers is the ability to negotiate. Junior officers interact in an environment in which organizations do not necessarily share a formal relationship. Though negotiation is a skill recognized as necessary in our senior leaders, it has often been relegated to a niche type temporal capability principally addressed in pre-deployment training programs. While West Point offers an elective on Negotiation, it is essentially absent from Army PME specific to junior officers. Negotiation requires a broad range of interpersonal skills.<sup>25</sup> Junior officers must possess the ability to understand and observe directed organizational red lines (nonnegotiable points), respect differing points of view, suppress ethnocentric tendencies, diagnose unspoken agendas, and detach themselves personally from the process even while being a direct participant.<sup>26</sup> The value of successful negotiations is immeasurable, and successful negotiations not only require tremendous preparation,

but are also equally reliant on training and practice. Although the importance of this skill set is well documented, leader development programs designed to increase this skill have not kept pace with other impressive warfighting improvements.<sup>27</sup>

In a study analyzing the importance of successful negotiations to the mission in Iraq, David Tressler - the author - provides several revealing insights. He argues that negotiation is often the last chance to prevent situations from becoming lethal and to solve problems in a way that poses less risk of losing American lives.<sup>28</sup> Even when the threat of escalation is low, negotiations contribute immeasurably to the accomplishment of a myriad of operational and strategic goals. Additionally, when conducted effectively, negotiations assist in meeting the interests of host nation counterparts, host nation leaders, and engender good will among the population.<sup>29</sup>

The final interpersonal skill deserving greater training and development in junior officers is the ability to conduct key leader engagements. Key leader engagements – in which officers engage with and affect the attitudes of key local and regional leaders – proved critical to mission accomplishment in Iraq and Afghanistan. In cultures where interpersonal relationships are essential in gaining the trust and confidence of the local population, key leader engagements take on even greater importance.<sup>30</sup> Key leader engagements are essential in building and sustaining effective long term relationships, and extend far beyond knee-jerk reactions to crisis. As such, key leader engagements require an understanding of cultural and environmental factors, a comprehensive understanding of relevant command themes to be reinforced, and the mastery of a framework that facilitates preparation and synchronization of messages. Lastly, written assessments resulting from key leader engagements are instrumental in assisting

senior strategic leaders in better understanding the operating environment. Over time, these assessments allow organizations to track progress on issues and determine their contribution to desired end states.

Sadly, Army leader development is failing. Aside from 11 years of experiential learning, in which operations in Afghanistan and Iraq provided rich opportunities to develop both kinetic and non-kinetic skills, leader development as a strategy for improving conceptual, technical, and interpersonal competencies is missing the mark. The Army is not providing the necessary guidance, resources, or investment needed in junior officer leader development. Even in an era of fiscal constraint, this dynamic must change.

### The Army Leader Development Model

Leader development is a continuous and progressive process that occurs throughout an officer's career.<sup>31</sup> It is a mutually shared responsibility between three domains – the Institutional Army, the operational force, and the individual. Each of these domains capitalizes on training, education, and experience. The goal of The Army Leader Development Program is to produce competent and confident leaders with the skills required to effectively lead at the tactical level in ambiguous and complex environments. The Army Leader Development Model, portrayed below, identifies important interactions necessary in the development of leaders.

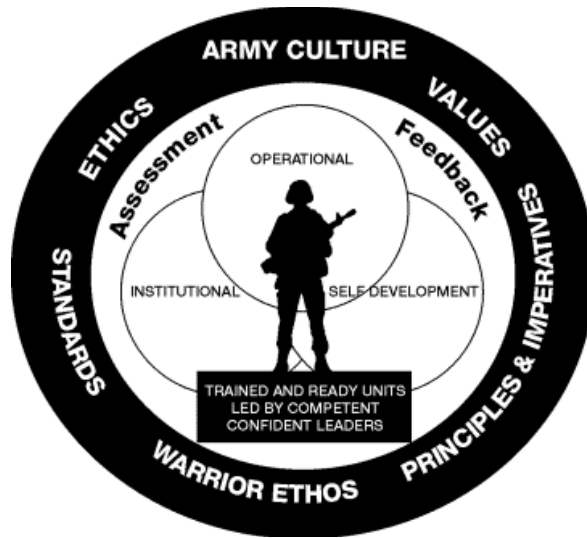


Figure 1: The Army Leader Development Model

Individual officers generally gain knowledge and skills and enhance abilities through PME programs in the institutional Army, and practice them during operational assignments. Self-development is a personal responsibility and reinforces the Army's belief that Soldiers are ultimately responsible for their own professional development. Self-development enhances, sustains, and expands the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained from assignments and institutional learning.

#### Organizational Leader Development

Leader training and leader development programs focus on developing leaders who are self aware, adaptive, competent, and confident.<sup>32</sup> All units conduct training on a host of collective and individual tasks, but activities intended to develop a broader range of leadership skills vary greatly in content, frequency, and perceived quality. In short, there is no set of activities that could be characterized as a standard or typical unit-level leader development program. This is a significant deficiency.

Junior officers lead people; therefore training and skill development that increase a leader's ability to interact more effectively with people (human dimension) should be a

fundamental imperative of all leader development programs.<sup>33</sup> The majority of officers in the operating force spend the first ten years of their career leading Soldiers. While the institutional domain should bear responsibility for introducing and educating leaders on necessary interpersonal competencies (laying the framework), the operational domain should consistently reinforce and refine these competencies through experiential learning and leader development programs. For many reasons, the operational domain is the perfect environment to develop interpersonal competencies. First, unit leaders bear the responsibility of ensuring subordinates are proficient in tasks commensurate with their skill level, and for facilitating their development. The need to develop tactical and technical skills in junior officers resides at the core of organizational leader development. However, as senior leaders articulate the changing nature of the future operating environment, greater emphasis must be placed on development of interpersonal competencies necessary for success in that environment. Second, operational units provide the perfect laboratory for developing these competencies. Commanders – senior officers – leading these organizations possess the experience, resources, and skill to develop these competencies in their subordinates. Most junior officers remain in their first assignment for three to four years. This provides multiple opportunities for field grade officers to mentor junior officers and refine skills necessary for success. Finally, at the organizational level, a junior officer's peer group is large. This provides ample opportunity for collaboration, experimentation, and the establishment of working groups.

Unfortunately there is scant guidance provided with respect to leader development in the operational domain. AR 350-1, *Army Training and Leader*



*Development*, assigns unit level commanders the responsibility of developing subordinates. This regulation states, “they [commanders] must deliberately plan, prepare, execute, and assess leader training and leader development as part of their overall unit training program.”<sup>34</sup> The regulation also directs leader training and development focused on mission performance. However, at no point does it define specific competencies that should be developed in future leaders. Defining the focus of leader development is left to the discretion of the commander. Almost exclusively this development is tied to junior officer administrative education (e.g. The OER System) and the tactical tasks that support the wartime mission (e.g. How to employ indirect fires in support of an attack), with little consideration given to the development of interpersonal competencies that invariably support the mission. Army leader development must strike a balance by sustaining and improving the type of tactical combat related skills that continue to provide the institution a marked combat advantage over adversaries, while simultaneously developing the type of competencies and skills addressed in this research effort.

The lack of guidance pertaining to leader development, coupled with the fact that units have been consumed by preparation for known combat, has resulted in leader development programs focused on how to do things – tactics – instead of developing broader competencies in the junior officer corps. As operations in Afghanistan come to a close, and leaders articulate the future operating environment, greater emphasis must be placed on these competencies. The Army must recognize that training and leader development programs do not develop self-aware and adaptive leaders. A greater effort must be made to do so.<sup>35</sup>

## Recommendations

The Army's ability to change organizational beliefs and practices pertaining to junior officer development will require cultural change through the application of embedding and reinforcing mechanisms. Embedding mechanisms emplace assumptions into an organization, and reinforcing mechanisms support them. Senior leaders emplace assumptions into an organization simply by paying attention to, measuring and controlling certain aspects of the organization.<sup>36</sup> They also emplace assumptions into an organization by allocating resources to ensure subordinate units can implement change. Senior Army leaders reinforce the embedding of assumptions with formal statements such as training guidance, training philosophies and other narratives. This research effort recommends the consideration of the following ideas and concepts that will allow senior Army leaders to use both embedding and reinforcing mechanisms to change Army culture as it applies to the importance of developing interpersonal competencies in junior Army leaders.

- Hold senior leader forums to stimulate discourse and dialogue on the importance of junior leaders possessing the types of interpersonal competencies described in this paper
- Modify existing Army doctrine to reflect the importance of these competencies, and how they enable junior officers to effectively lead during the execution of complex and challenging operations
- Develop and publish training guidance and philosophies that direct the implementation of training and education on interpersonal competencies in both the institutional and operational domains

- Include instruction on interpersonal competencies in pre-commissioning programs, basic officer leader courses (BOLC), and Captain's Career Courses (CCC)
- Integrate training on key leader engagements, negotiations, communicating through interpreters, media training and consensus building in both institutional and operational leader development programs of instruction
- Continue to emphasize these tasks and skills during pre-deployment training programs
- Assess interpersonal competencies through the Officer Evaluation Report
- Develop a set of performance measures and associated metrics to enable this assessment
- Provide junior officers more opportunities for advanced schooling
- Resource a Masters level program on leadership that targets Army Captains prior to company command. Consider integrating the following subject matters areas into the curriculum:
  - Team building and leadership; Ethics and Decision Making; Strategic thinking and communicative skills; Diversity management; Cross-Cultural Competence; Organizational development
- Provide operational units simulation capability such as the Live Virtual Constructive environment trainer to further develop interpersonal competencies through vignette and situational training exercises
- Use "Tiger Team" type forums within operational units to stimulate greater collaboration between junior officers in operational assignments

## Conclusion

Leader development has always been important for the Army, and in the future, it must remain so. It cannot be a gap-filler on unit training schedules, or an afterthought to a unit training plan. The Army must take a holistic look at leader development, and develop strategies that can be implemented and resourced in both the operational and institutional domains by unit commanders. Leader development must become a central theme, and must parallel and compliment unit training with the understanding that interpersonal competencies contribute immeasurably to mission accomplishment. The following quote by General Dempsey, the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, underscores these thoughts:

Throughout our long history, the United States Army has developed capable and prominent strategic leaders. In fact, we pride ourselves in the long line of strategic leaders that have served this great Army and our beloved nation through its highs, its lows and everything in between for 235 years. To preserve this great legacy, it is our obligation to keep first things first” and ensure leader development remains our first priority.<sup>37</sup>

Leader development is misunderstood and poorly resourced across the Army. Army doctrine bears the responsibility to clarify the concept of leader development and better identify and define competencies necessary in our junior leaders for success in the future operating environment. Senior leaders must think more holistically about home station leader development in units, and develop a framework that supports it.

Junior leaders see a clear disconnect between current leader development and the requirements of the operating environment. In order to address these deficiencies, the Army has to change the collective mindset regarding leader development and make the appropriate investments in education, training, and doctrine to rectify the deficiencies. The missions in Iraq and Afghanistan offered unparalleled leader

development opportunities for junior officers immersed in an environment that demanded flexibility and adaptability. As these missions culminate, the Army loses the very tool that has been instrumental in the development of the current generation of adaptive, flexible and innovative Army officers that have ensured the organization's success since its inception. Unless the Army acts now, with due diligence, during the next conflict the newest generation of junior officers will find themselves much like my platoon leaders and company commanders in Kunar Province in 2009 -- unprepared for the demands of the operating environment. The Army faces a strategic choice, and must choose wisely to ensure and maintain its enduring reputation as the nation's premier land force.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Interview with General Stanley McChrystal, The Daily Show with Jon Stewart, January 8, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Operation Enduring Freedom, "OEF Coalition Casualties by Province," <http://icasualties.org/OEF/Index.aspx> (accessed November 17, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Training and Doctrine Command, "A Leader Development Strategy for a 21st Century Army," November 25, 2009, 2.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 28.

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